

Statement from the MHTE Graduate Students

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Attachments: MHTE Students' Statement to Dean Richmond on JSS.pdf (97.08 kB)

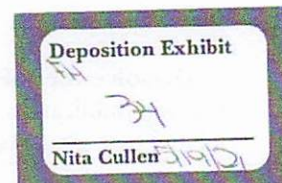
Dear Dean Richmond,

We hope that this email finds you well. Please see the attached statement from graduate students of the Division of Music History, Theory, and Ethnomusicology regarding the *Journal of Schenkerian Studies*, Volume 12. This response represents the collective position of the majority of graduate students in our division who collaborated after lengthy discussion. It also has the support of additional students who did not sign due to fear of retaliation from Dr. Jackson. We submit our position with the understanding that the identities of the signatories remain anonymous for their own protection.

We look forward to engaging with you on these issues. Thank you for your attention to these important matters.

Very sincerely,
Peter Kohanski, President
Graduate Students of Musicologists *and* Theorists (GAMuT)

Salvador Hernandez, President
Student Society for Ethnomusicology at North Texas (SSENT)



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Dear Dean Richmond,

We, a cross-section of graduate students in the Division of Music History, Theory, and Ethnomusicology (MHTE), write to condemn the latest issue of the *Journal of Schenkerian Studies* (JSS) and address concerns that recent events have foregrounded.

We are appalled by the JSS's recent perpetuation of anti-Black racism and platforming of ad hominem attacks in response to Dr. Philip Ewell's scholarship. These egregious acts go beyond the bounds of academic discourse and require a strong, swift response from the College of Music. We call upon the CoM to dissolve the JSS, dismiss Dr. Timothy Jackson, make substantial changes to the Center for Schenkerian Studies (CSS), implement consequences for those involved in the publication of the most recent issue of the JSS, and work to foster an institutional culture within the MHTE Division and the CoM where these events could never transpire. These changes are not only necessary for the sake of UNT's reputation and the well-being of its students but are also moral imperatives that can no longer be ignored.

Dishonesty and a Lack of Academic Rigor in the JSS

While we encourage the CoM to undertake a full investigation of the JSS Volume 12, we would be remiss if this document did not highlight the most reprehensible aspects of the journal.

1. **Lack of peer review:** The call for papers gave a two-week deadline for responses; all papers were accepted, without asking for substantial edits; papers were in some cases given only a five-day turnaround once notified of their acceptance to the journal; and the deadlines were selectively enforced, which allowed more anti-Ewell submissions to be accepted.
2. **Illicit collaboration.** After coopting the JSS in order to mount an attack on Dr. Ewell, Dr. Jackson proceeded to solicit responses from his close Schenkerian colleagues. The result of this solicitation and coordination between six of the anti-Ewell papers produced a markedly skewed bias toward the anti-Ewell responses. In stark contrast to this coordinated effort by Dr. Jackson et al., Dr. Ewell was neither notified nor asked to respond, as is standard academic practice.
3. **Editorial missteps.** The Assistant Editor, Levi Walls, was completely powerless to edit content and ideas or to provide substantive feedback during the editorial process. In practice, Dr. Jackson exercised control over editorial decisions, a power he should not have had. Although Levi did everything within his power to prevent the publication of racist views, the implications of his title meant that he was attacked for his ostensible decision-making role in the journal. This view was compounded by online references to the JSS as a publication run by doctoral students.

The JSS Moving Forward

Given the egregious behavior by the JSS and specifically by the advisory board, we urgently call for the following steps to be taken:

1. **Dissolve the JSS.** The JSS has demonstrated that it does not meet the standards of a peer-reviewed publication. The basis of academic discourse is trust and authenticity, and the JSS has violated that trust. As such, there is no reason for it to exist.

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2. **Publicly condemn the issue and release it freely online to the public.** All contributors should be held fully accountable for their comments, which must not be hidden for the sake of the self-preservation of any involved parties. By making this volume accessible to the public with a disclaimer from the CoM, we hope to enable all scholars to address this problematic discourse.
3. **Provide a full, detailed, and public account of the editorial and publication process, and its failures.** The JSS must make a public account of the process so individuals who intentionally subverted academic norms can be held accountable, and so that innocent parties might be absolved of both guilt and a burden of silence.
4. **Hold accountable every person responsible for the direction of the publication.** This should also extend to investigating past bigoted behaviors by faculty and, by taking this into account, the discipline and potential removal of faculty who used the JSS platform to promote racism.
5. **Ensure that no member of the current JSS Advisory Board oversees or reviews work done by a TA or TF.** Neither Dr. Slottow nor Dr. Jackson should be permitted to oversee graduate students in any employment capacity, including supervising those who manage graduate student assistantships.

Calling for Dr. Jackson's Dismissal

Dr. Jackson should be removed from the UNT faculty because he has shown that his values are diametrically opposed to those of our division, the CoM, and the university at large. He has a history of racist, sexist, and abusive behavior in his many capacities. He was removed from the oversight of the RA for the CSS due to his treatment of previous RAs. Among the issues raised were:

1. Using the CSS RA to aid with his personal research
2. Requiring student work during the summer without pay
3. Extortion through grade manipulation and threats to students' careers and reputations

These abuses were eventually addressed, but it took CoM administrators years to attempt to remedy these problems. While this included Dr. Jackson's aforementioned removal from overseeing the CSS RA, his influence over both the CSS, the JSS, and the graduate research assistantship unofficially continued. His present offenses concerning this issue of the JSS are part of a pattern of harmful behaviors that have disproportionately affected marginalized students and faculty. His reputation extends beyond UNT and affects how our division is perceived externally.

If the CoM is unable to remove Dr. Jackson from his position, these steps must be taken at a minimum:

1. **Require a formal apology and retraction.** Dr. Jackson must provide a formal apology and retract his explicit racist comments and ad hominem attacks on Dr. Ewell.
2. **Prevent power imbalances.** Given that Dr. Jackson's position has facilitated past abuses, he must be prohibited from teaching required courses, advising students, serving on committees in any capacity, or wielding power over students or faculty.
3. **Eliminate research and travel funding and prohibit involvement in UNT publications.** Funding for Dr. Jackson's research and travel must be immediately and permanently terminated so that he can no longer manipulate the power structures within UNT publications to promote his own ideas. UNT must not provide a platform for his views.

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Addressing the MHTE Division's Culture

Issue 12 of the JSS—both in its content and publication process—sheds light on a problematic culture within our division. Several faculty members have demonstrated through their actions a lack of understanding of issues of diversity. More concerning is the broader pattern of ineffective responses to graduate students' concerns. As illustrated in both Dr. Jackson's previous and current behaviors, problems were ignored by multiple administrators in the division and college at large. Action was only taken after these issues received broader (and especially public) attention. We recognize Dr. Brand's efforts to change our culture by initiating diversity training within our division and fostering an atmosphere where graduate students generally feel welcome when bringing issues to him, yet this has not yet led to an environment that prevents such abuses from happening. It is a start, but much work remains to be done.

With that in mind, we call on the MHTE Division and the CoM to take the following steps to critically examine and radically transform our institutional culture:

1. **Launch an investigation into the culture in UNT, the CoM, and the MHTE Division.** This investigation should take into account past concerns and remove barriers that led to inaction within the division and CoM. Specific concerns include addressing racism and sexism and serving diverse communities. A third party—such as representatives from the Division of Institutional Equity and Diversity—should oversee this investigation.
2. **Create a reporting process that ensures transparency, clarity, and protection from retaliation for graduate students within the MHTE Division and CoM.** There are many more troubling incidents that we would like to bring to your attention, and we recognize that there will be many more in the future. We look forward to the conversations necessary to bring about this institutional change.
3. **Appoint a faculty member (or faculty members or university representatives) specifically tasked with advocating for graduate students.** We call for one or more faculty members to be specifically charged with hearing graduate student concerns, corroborating those concerns, and advocating for appropriate responses both within and outside the CoM.

We call upon the MHTE Division and CoM to take these proposed actions, and we look forward to a dialogue as we work together to make UNT the best version of itself. We eagerly await your response.

Sincerely,

Rachel Gain

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